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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510 - 3505

March 31, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

I am glad your Administration recognizes the need to compensate workers on the frontline of the public health emergency. Our nation's doctors, nurses, grocery store workers, home health care workers, building cleaners, delivery workers, letter carriers, transit workers, and many others continuing to work at essential businesses should be fully compensated for their commitment and sacrifice, which they make at great risk to them and their families. In addition, your Administration must take additional steps to protect these workers by directing employers to implement critical health and safety requirements that will reduce the exposure and spread of the coronavirus in the workplace. Failure to implement these requirements will continue to put workers' lives in danger.

The next coronavirus-related legislative package considered by Congress should include a requirement for all companies deemed essential during the coronavirus pandemic to provide so-called "hazard pay," or Pandemic Premium Pay, to their workers. Pandemic Premium Pay should be equal to time and a half wages. It should be available to all workers, including part-time workers and independent contractors, for all of their hours worked, and it should be provided in their regular paychecks. Importantly, Pandemic Premium Pay should be retroactive from the beginning of the public health emergency and last for its duration. These specifics are necessary to ensure any effort to provide Pandemic Premium Pay is done in the most meaningful, efficient and cost-effective way for workers and for taxpayers. I look forward to working with you to include it in the next coronavirus-related legislative package that reaches your desk.

Many health care workers have already fallen ill, and at least three have died as a result of the coronavirus. Additionally, there are reports of workers contracting the virus in grocery stores and other places of employment. Providing Pandemic Premium Pay will not mitigate frontline workers' health risks, which is why your Administration must also quickly publish an Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) that requires employers to implement comprehensive infectious disease exposure control plans to protect frontline health care and all other essential workers from the coronavirus. Worker health is public health, and we must protect the health of workers to protect the public.

Several states have already published guidance for essential employers that instructs businesses to reduce the total number of employees at a facility at one time, provide frequent hand washing opportunities and resources, and perform enhanced cleaning of workplaces to reduce the spread of the coronavirus. Any ETS issued by your Administration should incorporate these and other instructions. Specifically, an ETS must also include compulsory protective equipment requirements and other standards for health care and emergency responders, as well as a requirement that all other workers stay six feet apart from customers and other coworkers. A comprehensive ETS is critical to protecting workers, their families, and the public from the spread of the virus. In addition, no worker should be forced to come to work, particularly if they are exhibiting symptoms, if they do not feel safe doing so.

Health care workers and all individuals who continue to report to work during this pandemic are frontline employees who deserve gratitude, protection, and support. I am glad that your Administration recognizes the risks they face and sacrifices they make during this health emergency. I look forward to working with you to ensure employers provide the well-deserved Pandemic Premium Pay necessary to adequately compensate frontline workers. And I urge you to immediately issue an Emergency Temporary Standard to protect these workers, their families, and the public from further spread of the coronavirus.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sherrod Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator